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The Right of Freedom

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SLAVES OF "MARKET SOCIALISM"

With president Lukashenka coming to power, the realities of Soviet times are gradually coming back. On front pages of newspaper and at the beginning of TV news "field news" are featured as the most important events as well as the news about the "struggle for harvest" .The Slogan: "To feed people is the most important thing!", so popular with the Soviets, again became the main one. Agriculture has never been paid so much attention and car as nowadays, even under communism. Only it way noticed long time ago, that if such an attention is paid, goods of products first necessity are disappearing one by one from the shelves of the shops. The harvest of grain and potato is very poor in spite of a investigation, collective farmer's wages is the lowest in the country, the absolute majority of collective farms – is eternal debtors of the state. As a result, a million of Belarusan collective farmers can't feed 10-million population.

The reasons are not rooted in low productivity, mechanization and automatization of work, not in the excessive state guardianship of peasants (prevention of any initiative and understanding), not in the orientation towards old, Soviet, not-justified forms of work on the awful conditions in which the majority of our peasants live in comparison even with city inhabitants, but in the fact that as if in the country "there are not enough working people". Soviet authorities thought to cope with this very reason for 70 years. Just imagine: in developed countries one farmer can feed not less than 100 his compatriots, while in our country one villager can't feed 10 city inhabitants (many people gave up the hope on the village long ago and have dachas) but never the less: there are not enough people.

For 10 post-soviet years city inhabitants student and schoolchildren have forgotten what it means to help collective farmers to take collective farms under patronage. But Belaru' san authorities who are boasting of not permitting collective farms to cancel, this summer patronage has been widely spoken about. Not because there was a fantastic harvest, it's now even below the aver

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CHRONICLES

On the 29 of July – the judge of Mahileu Central District court Plotnikova fined the leader of local organization of Belarusan National League Anatol Fedorau for 37,5 mln. roubles (more than 400 US dollars). Fedorau was found guilty that on 15 of July, 1998 he organized a not-allowed picket in Pershamaiskaya Street in Mahileu to protect the rights of foreign diplomats, whose Belarusan authorities ousted of their residencies in Drazdy.

On the 10 of August – at a Russian-Ukrainian boundary crossing Tomashouka, in Brest region, the custom-officers detained 2 Czech students – Lubash Veselya and Michail Cherni. The customs officers confiscated from the youths. Who traveled from Brest to Lvov, the bulletins of the Human Rights Center "Vyasna-96" and "Khartia-97", "Naviny," "Pagonya" and "Brest courier" issues (all in all 36 copies), as well as photos, testifying the human rights abuse in Belarus. The citizen of Czech Republic had spent hours at the customs, where questioned, were they had taken and were they were going with the materials which compromise the President of the Republic of Belarus and harm the image of Belarus abroad. The students' demands to connect with the Czech Embassy in Miensk and to have an interpreter, were ignored by the custom-officers. Having checked the luggage of Czech citizens several times and confiscated the sedition, they released the students. They had to come back to Breast and later on they returned to Prague.

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Charity on Speculation

Charity organizations, that set up about a year and a half ago, have been under pressure and recently the negative tendency is even growing. Lukashenka and his companions came to the final agreement that charity is like more commerce.

In August the Government has introduced licenses for charity. For instance, if any organization is going to deliver very expensive medicine to seriously ill people, to help people, to send children from Chernobyl areas to have a rest somewhere abroad – first of all it has to find money for the license. But one remark – not a trading certificate but a license to help people... in reality, it's common people, moreover – poor and ill, who suffer from our government human innovations. Beginning from last spring, when our government had complicated the procedure of checking human help from Western countries at the customs, whole carriages with essential medical equipment, medicine had been waiting for months at the sidings in different towns. Meanwhile the lives of many people at hospitals depended on the deliverance of this medicine. From the beginning of 1997 Belarusan Government introduced detailed and total registration of human aid – like registration of commercial supplies. Because of high duration of this procedure, foreigners, who wished to deliver and give human aid to a hospital or a boarding school by themselves, couldn't find the opportunity to do it directly. "Human aid," its distribution, to be exact, was under the control of state officials. To have an idea of them, just think in the State Department on Humane Aid there were such people as Victar Kuchinsky (the head of this structure) and Galina. Tsitsiankova (employee of one of the departments, President Administration Affairs manager's wife). At the same time Council for Defense began check-ups of Charity foundations activities. A year ago Gennady Grushevoy and Irina Grushevaya – heads of the well-known foundation "For Children of Chernobyl " – had to leave the country. There had been brought an action against them. But there was no evidence. On his return to the country this spring, Gennady Grushevoy declared that his foundation will continue to work. Nowadays, when a case against "For Chernobyl Children" was stopped, the government introduces a new clause: to buy a right for charity. It's likely to be that in Belarus the government wants even kindness and charity to turn into the source of supplement of the state budget.



Gennady Grushevoy is indignant with this decision. He refused flatly to buy a license for charity. He says that it's not a matter of money – the required amount is not very high, - but in principle. Nowadays the future of "For Chernobyl Children" Foundation is in question. In fact, according to all Belarusan Acts and Laws, the foundation doesn't exist any longer. But Mr. Grushevoy intends to continue his human activity. There is information about such difficulties in other charity organizations. Some of them are afraid to speak

Slaves of "Market socialism"

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age but in fact owing to "skillful" economic and demographic policy in the country there are not enough people to work in the fields and at the farms. More and more young people to get even not a high salary (15 – 30 dollars a month), which sometimes is not paid for half of a year and more, and in spite of hard working and leaving conditions leave village for cities.

Taking into consideration our political situation, the problem does exist. But in a totalitarian society there is only solution: by force. Firstly, our army helped the farmers to gather crops, now there is information that some student of high Institutes and technical colleges will be sent to gather potatoes. Recently our President Press Center informed that: "M.V.Myasnikovich, official of the President Administration, has considered the problem of providing collective farmers with working people. They support the idea of the head of administration and collective farmers to hire collective farmers in case they are permitted to do it by local authorities. It was said at the meeting of M.Myasnikovich with the authorities of Chervensky district, Mienk region.

What does it mean to here people from villages only if they are permitted to do it by local authorities. In fact people from villages are prohibited to change one place of living, the change the profession. Citizens of villages won't be able to find a job in city without local authority permission and it means that they will be liberally stuck o the village – like slaves of socialism with human faces, whose construction was announced in Belarus. It did occur in the USSR under Stalin's reign. Only Nikita Khruschau revealed the whole truth about the dictatorship and prisons and abolished this law and gave passport to peasants and enabled them to change places of living.

One can remind of old historical events, for a example, something like that existed in Russia in 1861.

Needless to say that this innovation is just infringement of Articles 13 and 23 of Human Rights Declaration, which says that every person is free to choose a place of living and he or she has a right to work, has a free right to work. Besides it's against the Belarusan Constitution, Article 30 guarantees the right to move without any restrictions and to choose a place of living in the Republic of Belarus.

about their situation in public – their friends think that any organization of such a kind may be wound up by force at any time.

Meanwhile Charity foundations have managed to do much, have acquired a central prestige. As a journalist I have heard much good about Gennady Grushevoy from the parents of children-invalids: they told me that they had appealed to many organizations, but in vain until they met with Grushevoy, who helped them. In the foundation there are a lot of letters of gratitude from children and their parents. At the end of 1996, when there was an additional election to the Parliament, one of the not numerous candidates who had been elected was G.Grushevoy: people trusted him and supported him. Then the results of election were nullified by Lukashenka. Besides the filling the pockets with money for buying charity licenses, the Government aims to show to people his "Kindness". Neither Grushevoy now the people like him, as they say, help the poor and ill nor Germans, Dutch, Americans, but a kind "father" with his team! In spite of all this, the information about the organizations, that had bought a charity license, the head human department conceals from non-state Mass Media.

Yana ZDANOVICH

Perhaps, our troubles are groundless: these words were uttered only at the meeting with the leaders of agriculture and the bill hasn't been passed, hasn't been signed yet. But there is information from some Belarusan districts where local authorities don't permit people to change village for cities. The officials are guided by an order from high circles act in a simple way: people from village can't get a permission to leave village and be officially registered in cities, as a result they can't find a job.

Aliaksandar Lukashenka is strict to his electoral campaign. He promised that all good things would be back again. He succeeds.

Andrey NALIVA

Regime investigated the case with "graffiti". Now is struggling with drawings on the walls.

On 31 of August Miensk Lenin District Court brought a verdict on the case of 2 art students – Igar Korsak and Pavel Selivonchik, who were found guilty in hooliganism. It had been the third one in our capital for the last half a year when young Belarusan people are found themselves in the dock for graffiti – paintings on fences and walls to their tastes.

These three cases were examined in accordance with the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, Article 201, which has been like a punishment for those who are not satisfied with Lukashenka's ruling of the country. It seems very curious that, in spite of the fact, that in many Belarusan cities the walls are "decorated" with different sayings and writings, sometimes brutal, the authorities and the militia view, what is good and what is bad differently. Nobody had ever been changed in Belarus with writing simple phrases such as "Vasya and Peter had been there" on the walls or fences. It seems to be that such acts are left to be unnoticed.

Political, national slogans and symbols make a difference. Those people, who have enough courage to express their viewpoints by graffiti, are prosecuted by the police. Having understood, graffiti of Belarusan youths as some kind of "writing-on-walls struggle of refractory and freedom-loving part of people, the regime "assumed the offensive" with the help of heavy artillery – the Criminal Code.



Firstly, Labkovich and Shidlousky were sentenced for a year and half, the letter has already done more than a year. Later A.Mukhin and his friends were given suspended sentences.

Young artists Igar Korsak and Pavel Selivonchik have done either this or that way. In their case it has nothing to do with slogans and the words – there are two letters, one paintings and a piece of paper with a photo.

We have already informed our readers about it. Two art – friends on a warm day of 2, June gathered together near the reservoir and went the bus stop when they were arrested by a police patrol. It seemed that it's here they who here wanted, orderly and with a purpose. And no wonder! some hours earlier a man of one of the microdistrict had called the police and announced that he had seen hooligan writings. Later on witnesses at the trial – policemen – said, that they had seized Igar and Pavel themselves at night by chance at the duty.

At first the case was of an administrative character, the students and the policemen agreed that the students would compensate for losses. Deterrents admitted that they had painted this or that sign on the stalls: an electric stall and a bus stop. But someone has made another decision. CGB have found that these signs are the symbols of an unknown organization with a very nice name "White Legion". It hadn't been heard for a long time. Earlier they had been such an organization in Belarus which united the former military.

Maybe our authorities are afraid of anything and recollected it? Of course

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"In the time when a Belarusan is pursued for speaking or writing in his own language, and those who date to speak Belarusan have to be courageous and , thank God, that Belarusan nation doesn't only consist of scared people".

Vatslau Lastousky.
"Nasha Niva" 1912

"Nasha Niva" – National Press: Dialogue in Different Languages

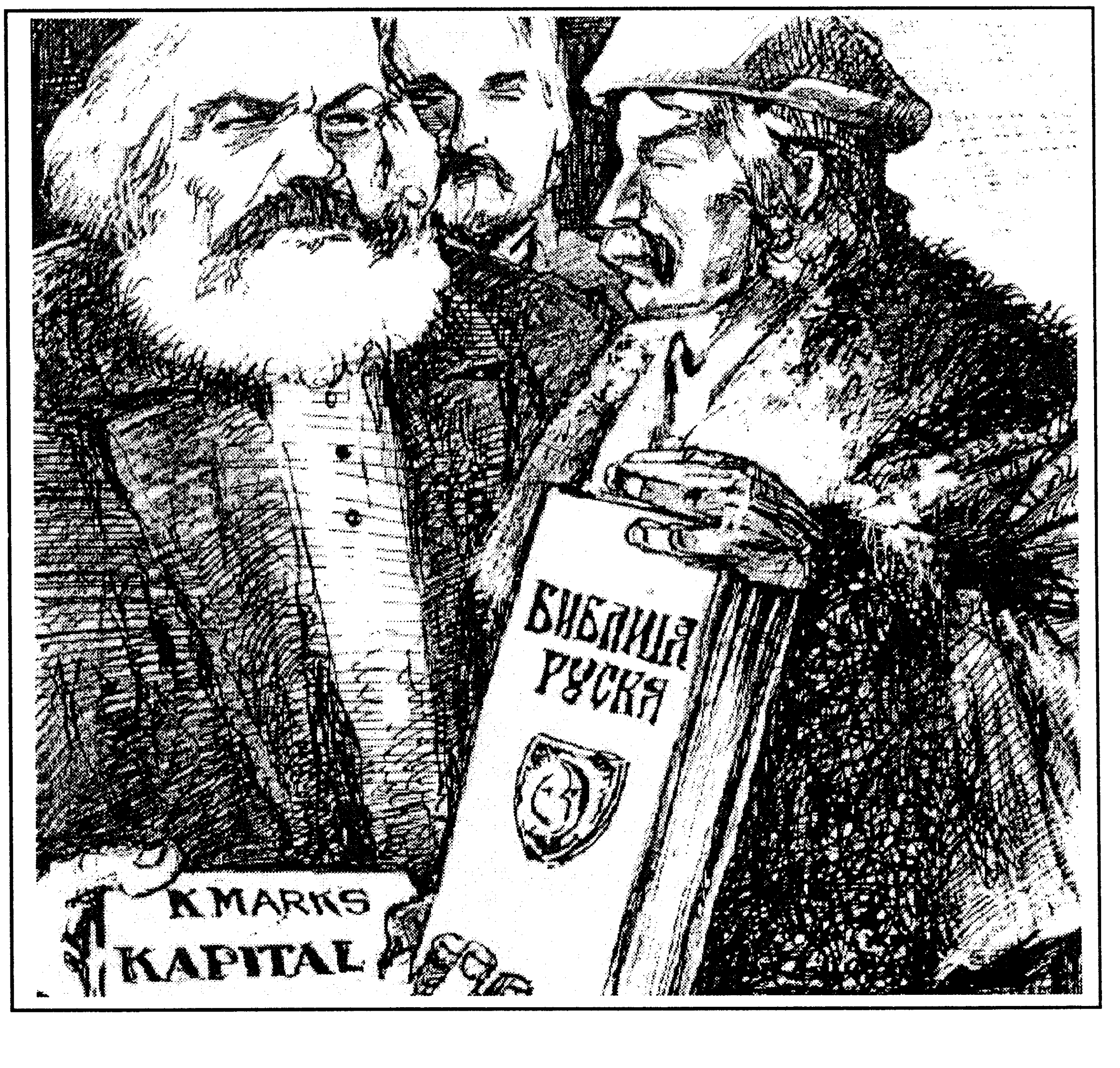
How will scientists and Economical Court "translate" it?

This summer "Nasha Niva" stopped being a simple independent Belarusan newspaper, to which the National Department on Press used to write in epistolary genre – they used to send letters with official warnings. "Nasha Niva" owing to the efforts of the most calculating and powerful department of our stable does not even stand out among those who are often given warning for having different opinions, but also seems to have a special place there. It happened because of 2 facts. Firstly, the ground on which the last warning May 29, 1998 was based – is already a precedent. For the first time even in Belarus, where the press seemed to have witnessed everything, the controlling department is dissatisfied not only with the contests, but with the language in which they are written. Secondly, "Nasha Niva" – is hardly the first independent edition, which questions in the court the right of the state to warn a newspaper. And the fact, that an economical court, it's a state but not a newspaper to blame, which because the state entitles this department to examine cases connected with the press, which are not under its control. As a journalist from "Nasha Niva" said at the steps of the Supreme Economical Court "In this building people lose their capital." It's not the matter of material capitals – as early as last winter Belarusan had to part here with an intellectual capital – the newspaper "Svaboda".

The ease with "Nasha Niva" had a different turn: The Nation Department on Press was present as defendant. The representatives of "Nasha Niva" confirmed their rights for a free choice of the language to publish. Today "Nasha Niva" is left to be one of the not-numerous editions, which is printed in accordance with the classic Belarusan Grammar – so-called Tarashkevitsa. Many of the newspapers, which used this grammar at the end of 1980s and at the beginning of 90s, later on, under Lukashenka, were forced to use language rules, reformed by Bolshevik authorities in 1933 and in 1956. Part of the newspaper has decided to be bilingual (Russian and Belarusan) at all in a new political situation, one can't but notice, that it's the faithfulness to the classic Belarusan language (in which at the beginning of the century her predecessor of the same name in Vilna was published) that the readers admire and like about it. It's also because the faithfulness to the traditions isn't only the means to preserve the unique edition but to preserve the national spirit in general. But our present authority view it differently. In particular, its representative department – the national Department, the representative of which, A.Baranau, repeated again at the trial, that the language of "Nasha Niva" is deviation from accepted norms of literal Belarusan language. We want to remind that such a declaration of officials is based on the new Press Law, adopted n January, this year, with some amendments. Even a year earlier analysts having examined the draft forecast future persecution Tarashkevitch Grammar. Because of the authorities, which are gradually carrying out the process of imposing the Russian language and ousting the Belarusan language of education, office work, authorities, book editing, if seems illogical to worry – even to introduce a clause in the law – about the purity of literal norms. When Lukashenka and his company are eager to study linguistics (for the first time during 4 years) – it results in the appearance of their study. The first victim was made to be "Nasha Niva".

By the way, during the previous years they used to give official warning to the newspaper for anti-president poems, written by its readers, and for not adequate (because it doesn't fit into the accepted communist standards). Featuring of guerrilla war in Belarus during the last war. Later on, the authorities under the pressure of national and world public opinion started thinking of their democratic image and decided to study the language. There came Professor Zhurausky, loyal to Lukashenka, to give a helping hand. He presents the Institute of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus – the man who is known for his negative attitude towards Tarashkevich Grammar as to the anti-Soviet language.

The situation with present language (as well as political) disputes is quite clear to those who know our history at least the history of the XX-th century. It's known written Belarusan language was banned in the Russian Empire (It's the language of the nation who gave to the Slavs first books, and the Eastern neighbors – Russian), and after the Renaissance came. Belarusan newspapers and magazines began to be published after along break. Among them there



was "Nasha Niva", predecessor of the present "Nasha Niva". As a result Belarusan Actions had suffered from the authorities of the Russia Empire: searches, arrests, winding up. The journalists of Belarusan newspapers (Suture National poets were among them) were sent to prison. It's interesting that under Lukashenka reign the successors of "Nasha Niva" are sent to the same prisons. Only at that time Yakub Kolas was sent to jail (after his name it's called the Institute of Linguistics, were Zhurausky is struggling against the language of these two newspapers).

Nowadays Slavamir Adamovich is among the most famous political prisoners.

What has happened to the journalists of the canceled by the tear "Nasha Niva" after 1917. Many of them were sent to prisons, firstly polish, then – soviet gendarme. And in 1933 when a Bolshevik council of (a political, but not a science organization) carried out a reform, having adjusted Belarusan grammar to the Russian one as close as possible, 4 years later, in 1937, the native speaker were wiping out, but not the language. Bars, tortures, a bullet in a head – that was Vatslau Lastousky's, Branislau Tarashkevich's, the founder of the first Belarusan School Grammar handbook, lives. His name, which the Soviet authorities wanted to be the name of the enemy, of a polish spy, gave name to a classical grammar without which one couldn't find the name "Belarus" on the map of the world. The Russified Belarusan language the fruit of the violent Stalin regime, keeping a Featureless nickname "Narkomauka" what that was all? Because it turned out to be unable to preserve itself, as a result (S.Dubavets, "NN" chief editor better said, "native speaker – it's not a Soviet tradition".) The Belarusan language has been transformed for some decades: it become officially permitted but only a written one. Nowadays the majority of Belarusans in Belarus can read in Belarusan, but can't (or doesn't want) to speak, write or think. The other part of nation chooses – together with "Nasha Niva" – "the language of theshot". It means the language at honor and conscience of its suffering nation. Together with the language they choose their future. Because "language" dispute around "NN" – is a clash of two interests. The attack of the dark past on the future. That's why they try to close down an anti-Bolshevik newspaper by referring Stalin's laws.

The authorities of the republic under Lukashenka's reign rule the country in accordance with the laws of 30s (it was after Stalin's death when "Narkomauka" was a little bit Belarusified. As the representatives of this regime think, the conclusions of Moscow linguists of the Belarusan language – are the nation-wide accepted norms f our language. But having become independent in 1992 – 1993 in our republic there were still disputes among Belarusan scientists about these nation-wide accepted norms. There had been a special commission on Belarusan, spelling, this problem had been discussed at a respectable science conference. But the scientists didn't come to a common agreement as to the nation-wide rules. Our Parliament, unfortunately couldn't have managed to introduce anything. But it seems that it must have been gone all through violent decisions, made by Stalin and Khruschev. They sailed, later the deputies who wanted to defend the language and the slag with the coot at arms, were pursued by Lukashenka's special detachments.

What next? According to the verdict of I. Piatukhova, judge of the Economical court, - there comes an examination. Let the scientists understand what is in the language, Belarusan as well, considered to be nation-wide accepted norms. And in what science or legislative aces these norms are presented. And finally if the classical Tarashkevich Grammar is deviation of language rules.

Yakub Kolas Institute of Linguistic of the Republic of Belarus bears responsibility for organization of this commission. It may happen that the results will be influenced by another figure – an acquaintance of the known Zurausky. Nevertheless, "Nasha Niva" asked the court to include 4 scientists the commission whom (in comparison, with the Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus members) it trusts. They are employees of the Association of the Belarusan Language, Miensk Pedagogical University, Belarusan State University and Grodna University. Other proposed candidates were rejected by "Nasha Niva". The representative at the State Committee on Press Baranau spoke negatively about the possible participation of foreign scientists- they shouldn't (by the way, independent of Belarusan authorities) interfere with our internal affairs.

Though all "Nasha Niva" requests haven't been considered, it's the editorial staff, by the judge Piatukhova's decision, who must hear all the expenses on the examination.

But even this state of things given hope.

We hope on honest and adherent to principles scientists for whom the truth and the science itself (to say nothing about the fate the native language) is above the present political situation. Perhaps, sometime later this period of our history will seem to be just an instance. Today the little victory of "Nasha Niva", the whole Belarusan nation in the name of the newspaper is that the court had to consider the newspaper demands (not all of them but still). But the moral victory is on "NN" side. The newspaper comes out, in spite of the State Committee on Press Decisions – says its chief editor Siargey Dubavets – As I see it, it's a symbol of Belarusan nation, which is above all terminal decision of the committee. I don't want the terminal to interfere with the eternal!

Tatiana SNITKO

CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE.

CODE OF ACT ON CHILDREN RIGHTS CAME OUT IN MIENSK.

On 20 – 21, March, 1998, in Miensk there had been an International seminar "Children rights: problems of children violence" the seminar was organised by International Helsinki federation and Belarusan Helsinki Committee with the participation of Ministries of health Care, Education and Internal Affairs. High-skilled specialists from the Republic of Belarus and Western European Countries: Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Moldava and others participated in it. As the result of the seminar, there had been published a collection "Children and violence" that has came out recently.

Problems of increasing children violence – drug addiction, vagrancy, child prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and psychological, physical and physical children violence in our country had always been ranked second after adult problems. In spite of the Convention on Children rights, adopted in 1989 by the General Assembly OUN (by the way, Belarus was among 20 first countries, which had ratified t) and in 1993 in our country a law was passed on children rights and in 1995 the National Plan of activities on Children rights for 1995 – 2000 may affirmed, we may say, that the change of attitude of adults to children right is only beginning. According to the poll, the majority of parents as unaware of the existence of such documents.

Nevertheless there are a lot of problems with children rights in our post Chernobyl and totalitarian country. It's confirmed by the participants' reports, which are published in the collection: "Child defence against violence in boarding schools" (A.Kuchinsky). "Social background of children insults at school" (A.Rusetskaya), "Juvenile delinquency in the Republic of Belarus" (A.Chernyakevich), "Problems of mental health of children" (N.Grigorieva) and others. Foreign guests spoke about the guarantees on children rights in their countries, and in the same time they shared their experience.

It's the first edition of such a kind in Belarus, and undoubtedly, it will be of great necessity not only to teachers, doctors and militiamen, but to all people who want our children to have the childhood, without violence from adults and peers.

Czechs and Slovaks, sorry!

At night 20 –21 August, 1968, soviet army had crossed the border of the sovereign Czechoslovakia to suppress with tanks the desire of fraternal nations for freedom, for normal way of living. About all these what was going on in Prague, and other towns and villages, we got to know 20 years later – after so-called "Perestroyka" when a soviet bogatyr with ceramic legs began to crack, and Czechoslovakia having passed through revolution, became independent, indeed. To repent, to ask for Czech and Slovaks pardon for blood of innocent people during those august 1968 we could have managed to do only 30 years after. And that was not only on the state level.

On 21, August, 1998, activists of civil initiative "Chartia-97" (by the way, present successor of the well-known Czech Chartia-77) together with their friends from United Civil Party and veterans of Armed Forces of USSR who took part in the Soviet Army invasion in ИSSR organised a picket in the centre of Belarusan capital under the slogan "Czechs and Slovak, we are sorry". Pickets help in the hands slogans in 4 languages in Czech, Slavonic and Belarusan - "Czechs and Slovak, we are sorry" as well as Czech, Slovak and Belarusan national flags. During the action the newspaper "Narodnaya Volya" with the materials about ИSSR in 1968 was being distributed. At the picket there were representatives of Czech Republic and Slovak Republic General Consulate in Mienk.

On the same day in Prague the friends of Belarusan club "Skaryna" picked the Russian Embassy in Czech. The aim was to draw the attention of Czech public to the similarity of Belarusan an and Czech events and to express gratitude to Czech people for the resistance and present support for Belarusan liberation movement. It says the declaration of Belarusan club in Prague on the occasion of 30 anniversary of Soviet occupation of Czech Republic "Many times in the history at our nations, great neighbouring countries attempt were made on our lives that used to result in sufferings and victims, economic recessions and cultural degradation.

Exactly 30 years ago, here, in the streets of Prague as well as many other towns and villages of Czech Republic, the desire for freedom was stopped by Soviet tanks. Invaders didn't even stop before common people. This action was accompanied by deception, harassment, and bribing of Czech reformats. The agreement between Moscow leaders and Czech Government resulted in 20 – year occupation of the country, repression against differently minded people, great immigration. The same took place in Belarus in autumn of 1996 when Moscow leaders Chernomyrdyn , Seleznev and Stroev convinced the head of the Supreme Soviet and Constitutional Court to reconcile with President Lukashenka ,to stop impeachment. It is true , there were no tanks in Miensk streets – they were in there places of dislocation (as it is known , Russian army is "temporary" located on the territory of the republic. But the means of conviction were just the same- false promises of a better life6 deception and harassment of especially persistent. The results of the event are similar to the Czech normalisation. The Constitution had been changed by force, the president obtained a dictatorial power, the atmosphere of fear was in the country. Repression against members of opposition had become a common practice, national language and culture are under pressure, economy is degrading".

On the same day actions of repentance took place in some other Belarusan towns. In particular, in Pinsk in the centre of the town employee of the local bread factory Siargey Telechan passed by with a Hogan, saying that one should feel sorry for violence, committed by Soviet regime against Czech and Slovak people.

Our correspondent

Regime investigated the case with "graffiti". Now is struggling with drawings on the walls.

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Lukashenka and his companions are in general afraid of everything: to look for spies or business plans of coup d'etat. To announce about the intentions to suppress upheavals is a typical Bolshevik habit of Lenin or Stalin.

At the end of June I.Korsak and P.Selivonchik were under the inquest, they gave a written, understanding not to leave a place, and were likely to follow Shidlousky's way. The inquest wasn't long: a month later there had been a trial. The verdict on the results of the preliminary investigation was bought from a political viewpoint. According to this documents the youths were charged with malicious mugging were sticking leaflets of "White Legion", painted the sign of swastika on the walls. To notice even a slightest similarity between the sign, painted by the youths and a swastika for a normal person seems to 'be impossible1'. At a trial scientists have presented their examination of the sign. Historians and art critics find this sign to be an ancient symbol of eastern Slavs-pagans. It's called "sparish". Our ancestors used to have a lot of such sign on the things of every day use long before. literature appeared, in this way they used to code the information, including the stars and planets movement. Most of these symbols are left to be unfold. They passed through centuries in the form of ornaments of folk motives. At the trial, the defense reminded that something similar can be found even

WAS IT REALLY IN VAIN?



On the 31, July, 1998 in Vitebsk Regional Burnt Centre Aliaxey Ivanavich Filipchanka died, Belarusan lawyer and right defender. He couldn't find another means to express his protest against presidential "vertical" which used to violate laws and our Constitution. He has burnt himself. After this act he have lived 23 days.

He couldn't have been saved. At least one could have tried to do it. 70 per cent of skin has burnt and the only hope left was to send him to hospital to the capital, to Mienk. But, it seems that local authorities hadn't shown any interest in their rescue attempts... Such people, as he was, are in bureaucrats' way and they don't feel comfortable. And that's why his life was predetermined. He realised what he was doing.

— I realised everything what I was doing. I'm a lawyer and I have certain goals and I try to obtain them – said Aliaxey Ivanavich some days after his action of self-burning, talking to his friends. The doctors, who spoke with him, found no deviation of the normal state of mind. In fact he knew what he was doing. But there was no way out.

Aliaxey Ivanavich had lived 48 years. He had worked as a lawyer for 20 years. He was an investigator of extremely important cases

He left the militia after the finishing of a well-known case in Belarus, called "Vitebsk case". He started working as a private lawyer. His last case became the real reason of the protest – he defended an inhabitant of Novopolatsk, whom local authorities wanted to take a private apartment away. To reach their goal local authorities tried all means. They established connections with militia, court, a procurator and even with firemen. Aliaxey Ivanavich exercised all juridical means to defend his client. But all his appeals to control departments, as well as to a procurator and the Supreme Court were in vain. It's hard to find truth, even in the capital. To say nothing about the provinces, where the local authorities are not elected by people, but are appointed by the President and have limitless power. That was the last straw that made him do it.

On 8 July, 1998 in front of Novopolatsk City Court Aliaxey Ivanavich Filipchanka poured 3 litter of petrol on himself and set fit fire. He did it when he had seen a militia detail, ready to perform the court decision to arrest him. Aliaxey Ivanavich knew that local authorities had been sick and tired of his persistence and he was threatened with arrest. He knew what a Belarusan investigation isolator meant, where a man could be kept for months in unbearable conditions without a court verdict or investigation. It was also one of the reason that pushed them to express his protest in such a way. He sacrificed himself.

A month has passed after his death. Only in independent press there was information about his act. The State Mass Media said no words. There were no public protest against unlawful actions in our courts, against tyranny and boundless power at local authorities, against the dictatorship which defends and protects its people. Was Aliaxey Ivanavich Filipchanka death in vain?

A. Chas

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in the ornament of the present national flag of Belarus. It's interesting, by the way, that rhombus (sparish consists of crossed rhombus) considered to be symbols of the sun for ancient Slavs. Old weavers in the villages call rhombus in the ornaments circles. What did the young Miensk artists pain then? There was such a song in the former USSR: "The Sun and the shy around..." but it was a child song and corresponded to pioneer stylistics. But the idea is – let the sun shine on our Motherland.' – similar the Witnesses at the trial were mainly militiamen, who presented one same testimony. It's a common stereotyped practice of the last years. The two accused have admitted themselves to be partly guilty. As it is said in investigation documents, the militia has caught them with paint containers, the glue, and the leaflets saying "Be with us." They were charged with sticking these leaflets, writing in capital letters "BL on the walls, with campaigning to become members of this organization.

Having considered all "for" and "against", the court, under Tattiana Zulkouskaya as a head withdrawn some counts of an indictment. For instance there were not enough evidence that Korsak and Selivonchik were painting the signs in the places, pointed in the investigation documents. The court didn't consider "sparish" to be a swastika. The militia and CGB considered that there were leaflets, but the court recognized them to be placards: in fact, the placard with youths on it hasn't got any political slogans or appeals. "Be with us" – this word may be said by football fans or just music fans... Article 201 p.2 (malicious mugging) has been changed by the court for Article 201 p.1 (mugging).

Some companies decided to use this case to improve their material situation. The organization "Minskenergo" has demanded to compensate losses for the sign on its booth and asked for 54 mln. of Belarusan roubles (almost a thousand dollars!) Later Pavel Selivonchik told me that another transition was quite satisfied wish 480 thousand roubles fine for the sign of the same size. The difference between one demands of the organizations is by 100 times! The barristers Tattiana Stankevich and Tattiana Verdomskaya, and public advocate from "Vyasna-96" Lubou Luneva found the fine, demanded by "Minskenergo", groundless.

Public prosecutor Sluka asked the judges to give the malicious muggers 1 years of suspended sentence.

But the court has brought another verdict. It had nothing to do with prison, Pavel Silivonchik and Igar Korsak were fined for 10 minimal wages (2,5 mln Belarusan roubles).

Ya. Z.

At the beginning of August in a Belarusan prison there was an incident, worthy of being noticed by a playwright and a director of a tragicomedy – the tragicomedy not only about prison, but more likely about modern Belarus as about any dictatorial state.

For prison the event was not an outstanding one, obviously, it is said to be just regular check-up. It reminded of old cinema of the UDDR to many people "Do you remember mother" – warders thought. So, Lukashenka became inviolable in Mienk prison №1. "All that would be funny, if only it were not so sad" – sums up the man, who wrote to us about this incident. His name is Dmitry, he has already done 3 years, but hasn't lost sense of humor and nasn't forgotten Tarashkevich Grammar. He believes that his case of bribery was framed up by CGB. Dmitry has been in prison together with Aliaxey Shidlousky. From their letters, it is clear that he is one of I don't write them openly, otherwise I'll have complications. Poems are not written in prison. I'm sorry. At any rate – now. I have been writing 4 years, but I haven't got any "summer" poem."

"I receive letters not so often as I would like to, a letter a day on the average. Maybe they are afraid. It's better to get fewer but from good people".

"In comparison with Valadarka (a prison) I have changed a lot. I became more mature, more serious,

Here I'm educated more than the others taken altogether

Aliaxey Shidlousky – a year in prison. How the political prisoner feels, what hopes for.

the film "Maxim's Youth"? – one of the witnesses asked in his letter. "So something similar happened, only local gendarmes didn't have sabres.

During the check-up warders defeated "Playboy" girls. Some of their pictures which were hanging on the walls and in the sideboards of the industrial part of the prison, in the so-called cloak-room the pictures were scraped off mercilessly by the warders. But only one picture survived. Where it was left looking from the wall "moral guards" stood still as if frozen. Nobody domed to put an end to this sedition. It wasn't "Playboy". It was a paper "Imya". The face of the elected by the whole nation president was looking from the last page.

> ***In comparison with Valadarka I have changed a lot. I became more mature, more serious and more cruel. One can't trust anybody here.***

The warders got confused looking around and wondering what would happen if they tear in "a noble impulse" – desecrate president's face. And they gave up. I spite of one fact that the president wasn't on the platform, meeting with people, he didn't even "ask for your support" his eyes were not "sparkling – it was a placard from "Imya" called, "Kuskinaother-98". "What if anybody denounce? – it will be "Kuzkina the not numerous people in prison, whose attitude towards a political prisoner is good and who helps him. And he is practically the only one who shares Shidlousky's ideas.

How is Alexia Shidlousky living now? In his letters he doesn't write about life in prison, hardly writes anything about concrete people who are near, and even when he does he never judges them. Seldom if there are such judgments they arise, problems with "the head of literary department" as Alexia friend calls censorship. For example, in one of his last letters almost half of a page was thoroughly crossed out. We didn't manage to read everything - we only got the main idea of the letter.

We haven't heard from any of them for 3 weeks. Though usually they answered some days after. Now the prison in the neighboring part of Miensk – is like on the other side of the world. The only thing left is to why they are keeping silent.

Meanwhile in my last letter I asked his permission to tell about his life by his letters. By extract from the letters. The readers of "Right for the freedom" asked, too.

Maybe Aliaxey did agree and that's the reason why he keeps silent. Perhaps tomorrow morning when this article is ready, we'll get a letter from any of them, confirming Aliaxey's agreement to have his words cited. Because this correspondence started with request to send Shidlousky's poems from prison.

8.07.98. "I was threatened to be given 2 more years of imprisonment in accordance with Article 67, of the Belarusan Criminal Code. That's why more cruel. One can't trust anybody here!"

16.07.98. They stopped threatening me with Article 67 – and began with "war propaganda". Yesterday these poems (written in jail) became a means of threatening. If they give me 3 – 4 years more – that will be the end. What else? I was offered to ease the sentence by working for harmful industry (a colony is entitle to do it), but I refused. Either I'll be free or I'll stay here. They are sick and tired of my publications in the newspapers. Mine and not mine. They like everything to be quiet like in the bog.

> ***They stopped threatening me with Article 67, - and began with "war propaganda".***

"A week is not much. It's almost nothing, it may seem strange but here it is a instant of time. Years here are counted like days. I'm sorry I'm writing cruel figures..."

"I have almost nobody to talk with here. Almost. There are 2 people with high education. One will be released in august. Another friend is here. He graduated from law faculty, a former tax inspector, was sentenced for bribery for 8 years. Our man. You understand what it means.

28.07.98. Thank you for "Nasha Niva". This newspaper has become cool (I think, at the beginning of 1997 there was a decrease). Now my news. Today is the 28, on the 30 – there will be a commission on a preterm release. If everything is OK, but I doubt, there will be a trial at the

end of august and then at the beginning of September, I will be released. But if I fail, I will be finally in February. The warder gave me a reference, it says that I'm cunning, unforgiving, revengeful, shrewd and industrious. They are perfectly willing the result to be negative."

"Yesterday I got a letter from Alina Belskaya from Finland... It turned out that I have no real friends. But I need them badly."

"As I understood you had been to Ichkeria. What a true heroine you are! Do you believe that I would be better put into prison. But, perhaps, that's because everything is familiar to me here."

"You can send me "NN" if there are fresh issues. It's a kind of fresh breath for me here."

"Yesterday (July, 27) we celebrated the Independence day, drank some coffee, tea and chocolate (I had provided with all that earlier).

> ***On the 30th I failed the commission. I was mocked at and sent back to prison. I'm not afraid of anything. I'm not a criminal and nobody will prevent me from publishing my poems.***

"My nickname in Valadarka was "BNF". It's clear why. And I am a "Prisoner." For instance: "Aleg Let's have some tea" – "I have already had". – "With Whom?" – "With "Prisoner". It's interesting that everybody understands. Owing to the fact, that beginning from the 14 may when I first appeared in the prison I have been educated more than all the rest taken together, I have become very famous. As you while in the prison, you can hear: "Oh, yes, that's "BPF" from detachment 21. He gets letters not only from his wife, but also from three mistresses. I've seen the letters myself!" Or: "Paznyak sent him to prison because he had spent all the money from the organization budget on whores and drinks."

Nonsense. But gossips exist side by side with by. They even say that I get 2 – 3 dollars on my account at one of the Polish banks for every day I spent here. (I have almost a thousand dollars!) that is the way I live.

6.08.98. I am very glad that I get your letters regularly. Because there are people who promise to write, but I get only one letter and they keep silent.

"On the 30th failed the commission. I was mocked at and sent back to prison. I'm not afraid of anything. I'm not a criminal and nobody will prevent me from publishing my poems."

"Skochka sent me "Right for Freedom." I couldn't expect it from you! You've made a true hero of me! But ... In general, everything is true. I read about the youths, who were charged with graffiti – one of suspending sentence. I'll be frank. I do know that politics is a dirty business, but highly appreciate, the truth. If I had been sentenced in accordance with Article 201.1 or 96.1, I would have considered it just. But 201.2 is something connected with CGB.

"As to PPRB wisdom, I have already known it for a long time. But what concerns revolution (I mean that Lukashenka promised to "suppress" a revolution). How could a revolution take place in such "national park" I red "Naviny" yesterday. It clearly features our present situation. Ordinary people are hysterics, other are in apathy."

(Almost 4 lines are crossed out. We managed to read with difficulty "Yuri Vasilevich" and also some other words. It says about the man, who used to block up and finally blocked Aliaxey up at the commission on release. Then there are crossed out words "... he was tripped up...") "... The direction, he id now an a sick-leave, and seems not to come back to work. It's a pity. He used to be an intelligent man, graduated from Pedagogical University. He knows history by 20 times better that me..." (then the text is crossed out again, we can guess with difficulties that Yuri Vasilievich, who had a pedagogical education, became a militia-man and as a result "he has lost all human traits").

11.08.98. "The letter, I wrote to you on the 7th of July, was sent back, because there was something in it, our head didn't like and nobody knows when you will get it. What did he dislike? Perhaps, that there were surnames of some people. Of comrades. I was said not to mention names and surnames7 yesterday I have completed 11.5 months of my detain. I have broken S.Adamovich's record in being in prison. A very sad record.

> ***... Gossips exist side by side with me. They even say that I get 2 – 3 dollars on my account at one of the Polish bank for every day I spent here. (I have almost a thousand dollars.) That's the way I live.***

(By the way among all political prisoners in Belarus in the late 2.5 years a citizen of Ukraine Andrei Sheptitsky has done the longest term – 1 year and 3 months; the second term among the longest had Slavamir Adamovich. Shidlousky seems to break Sheptitsky's term by February.

19.08.98. Today at last I got your letter. What is crossed out perhaps it not so important, but the person who had to be discharged from hospital didn't do it and had me to explain what was written there. He got offended when I called him a pawn of a little value. To be frank, I don't like to offend people, perhaps, I really overdid it. All the rest that was crossed out (at first it was only underlined), would be an offense, too. As you see, people who work here are "tender and sensitive..."

> ***Soon I will complete a year. In 6 days. It's sad that last year at that time I didn't even think of prison, but I loved studied, was making a foreign passport.***

"I have no poems with "tanks". Only in "Zombie" I've used "bombs" and that's all (Later on in the poem "Zombie" Aliaxey substituted this word by anther one, to rhyme it with one whole line – he didn't want this poem to be detained by censorship).

"You know, I also have "the third berth" The third tier. It's much higher than in a train (by 4 meters). All my attempts to climb down end in failure. I don't put much efforts in it. Here under the roof with my imprisonment I can stay. By the way my handwriting on a plank-bed is even worse than yours in train. If I were you will have to hire cipher-clerk.

"It's wonderful that my poems are published. I have even put on airs a little. It's a joke, of course. Though the things in Press – a football competition, letters of loving children... I feel ill at ease, even people here mock sometimes and call "Stalin – our father".

"The day before yesterday I got bald like your knee. Shortly I had a shave, I became bald. Why? To have another hair-do seems to be difficult here. You have to find scissors, to boil water, to find somebody who will cut you hair. Perhaps I'm not so good-looking, but I'm not a member of European Parliament. And I'll have my hair cut only 2 times during the rest of my term."

"Yes. Soon I will complete a year. I 6 days. It's sad that last year at that time I didn't even think of prison, but I loved, studied, was making a foreign passport. In 6 days I will have nothing to remember. Because in prison they recollect of freedom, not of bars."

"Shit! I have to go for bread. It's my turn, it's my turn, otherwise I will have nothing to have tea with in the evening..."

"PS. Vital. Where were you on the 19 August, 1991?"

Continuation of the theme

Realities of the Belarusan province: be obedient if you want to have a job

We have already written in the first issue of the bulletin "The Right for Freedom" about Mikola Zan'ka, a citizen of the Gantsevichi town, Brest Region, about his courage, principality and consistency in the struggle for his rights, about the local authorities' pursuit of him, about numerous arrests and punishments.

Such times and such a government have come today in Belarus, that the only thing demanded from the people is just to remain quiet, like mice under the broom. Any socially active and independently thinking person becomes at once noticeable and feels himself a "white crow". This first of all refers to provinces, where not only people are closer to the authorities, but also, whether you want it or not, the authorities are closer to the people. After some indignation actions and pickets, Mikola Zan'ka became known in Gantsevichi and... unwanted, especially by the managers of local enterprises and organisations. It happened so that he lost his job in 1996. On October 29 of the same year, M.Zan'ka registered in the Regional Citizens' Employment Centre in Gantsevichi. In order to maintain his family, M.Zan'ka was ready to do any kind of job, even the most unskilled one.

Within almost two years of being registered in the Centre, he was sent several times to the enterprises that were applying for labour workers. He returned however to the rows of the unemployed from everywhere. When the managers happened to find out that a well-known, if not to say a famous trade union actor and public man, who was wittingly in the opposition to the existing order, was directed to work at their enterprise, they refused to employ him because of different reasons. They did it just to avoid unnecessary troubles: who could know how he would behave in a new place and what if the working group would revolt?

Only to the Gantsevichi leather-haberdashery factory he was directed thrice. The first two times—on March 5 and March 11 – at the "position" of a watcher, and on June 6 – as a loader. Before M.Zan'ka came to the factory's Personnel Department, there had been vacant places there, but as he did come, they disappeared at once. The first two times the factory administration explained their refusal to M.Zan'ka by the fact, that "a decision had been adopted to employ only their own employees, who were made redundant", and the third time – "according to the reduction of the output"...

That was, so to say, an official explanation. The things that have been said to Mikola Zan'ka face to face are known only to him and those people who have said them. The result of Mikola's visits to the management of the leather-haberdashery factory was his complaint on the Factory Director, filed to the Regional Court. In his complaint Mikola Mihailavich told about his "adventures" connected with his wish to work at the factory and stated his understanding of the reasons for refusal. He thinks, that he has not been employed for his "political outlook".

The court took cognisance of the case, and on August 13, 1998 a judicial sitting "in re the social case of Zan'ka M.M.'s complaint on the manager's actions" took place.

It is not very interesting and worth retelling the legal procedure, as the result of it was known beforehand: to refuse M.M. Zan'ka's redress of grievance, because the administration had been acting in accordance with the law and M.Zan'ka "does not belong to those incapable to compete equally on the labour market, whose employment is obligatory". During "the investigation" however such an interesting detail became evident: "M.Zan'ka was refused to be employed as a loader under the reason of disagreement of the working group". Who had asked the working group about its concert and why it had refused to work together with Zan'ka, it was not explained. The court was not interested in that...



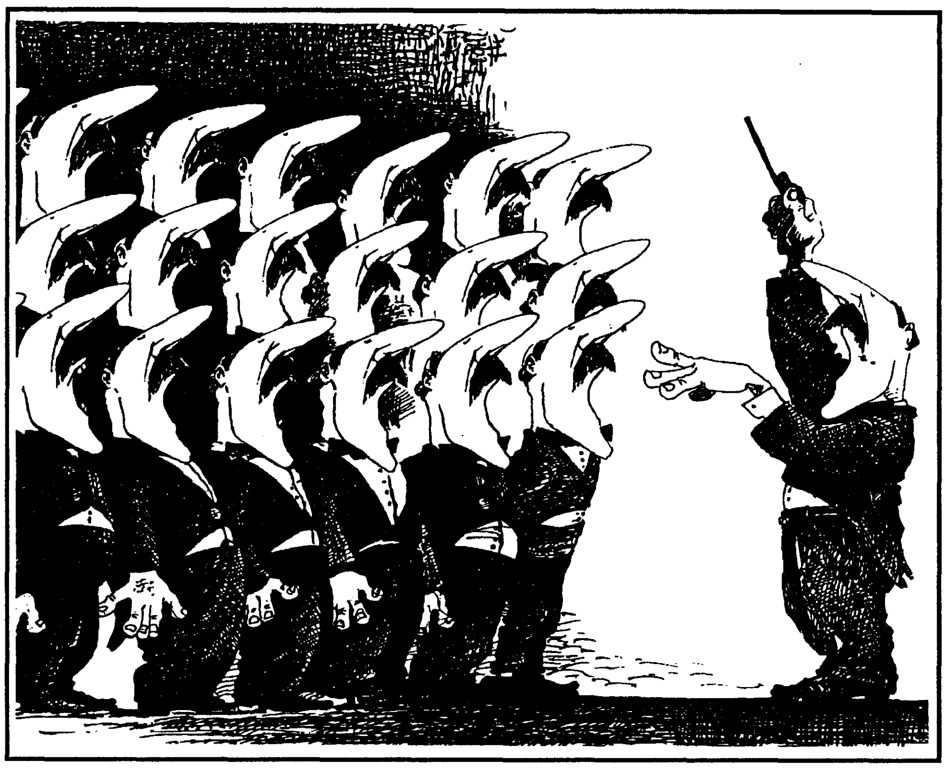
In one word, that all ended in the bench's decision to deduct from the unemployed Zan'ka "legal costs in 200,000 roubles for the State's profit". Besides, Zan'ka had to pay for the lawyer's service – 1,250,000 roubles "for prosecution of an administrative case in court" and 250,000 roubles "for composing an application". After that he was free to choose whether to litigate with the state officials or not...

The most wonderful thing happened later. The Gantsevichi Citizens' Employment Center managed at last to direct Zan'ka to work as a guard to... the regional department of the association "Security" at the Ministry of Domestic Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Some time later, when the militia arrested the "indefatigable opposition member Zan'ka" once again, his boss had to present a description of Zan'ka's general character to the superior bodies. The document stated, "At work M.Zan'ka has proved to be a good worker, responsible and conscientious. We do not have any reproofs connected with the performance of his duties..." Please remark for yourself: "Connected with the performance of his duties"... Everything is good, but M.Zan'ka is unable (unable, or does not want?) to behave in public places, he cannot but tell openly what he thinks about today's Belarus authorities and about the people's life at large. Here is the root of all his misfortunes.

Staff Correspondent

"WE CHOOSE, YOU VOTE FOR..."

It is whispered that the Belarus President is going to set the election of local representative authorities – it is of local Deputies' Councils – on the spring of 1999. The fact, that the President's National Assembly has passed the rule "On election of Deputies of local Deputies' Councils of the Republic of Belarus " during its first reading, proves that. There was no show of how, where and by whom this rule had been prepared. Nor it was debated on in the press, as it was done in the previous years, before the referendum of Lukashenka. The authority of Deputies, especially of those ones from local Councils, is rather low in the eyes of the folks, since they cannot actually influence the present posture of affairs in their regions. None the less it surprises why the "Popularly-Chosen" did not decide to "advise with the electorate" on what the election law should look like and why the latter is still kept dark. Let's consider only some articles of the new rule in order to make sure that it is time to forget about democratic elections in Belarus...



Article 10. According to this article, only political parties, working groups as well as citizens by dint of signature collecting have the right to nominate Deputies. Meanwhile, even the new Constitution of Lukashenka gives this right to all public organisations, registered in the proper order. In reality it means that public non-governmental organisations, which nowadays play a significant role in the political life of the community, will be unable to take part in the nomination.

Article 12. According to this article, the State defrays all the expenses on preparation and conducting of the elections. To that end, the resources of public associations, institutions and citizens of RB can be used, but only for "maintaining the extra budget election funds". Nobody will be able to support any certain Deputy, like it is practised in Europe, as the creation of cash funds in support of nominees is prohibited.

Article 13. This article makes provisions for responsibility for calling on to boycott the elections. Who is going to define what "a boycott" is and whether this will lead to limitation of the election campaign and propaganda?

Article 24. According to this article, local election commissions will be formed by Region (Town) Executive Committees and – by the President's "vertical line". It is known from the outset what it actually means at the today's conjuncture. The "vertical workers" will choose only their fellows, and the democratically and oppositionally inclined people will not enter the commissions.

Article 34. According to this article, existence of the primary organisation on the territory of the appropriate electoral district, established in the proper order, is one of the conditions for nomination for the political parties. It is a substantial restriction on nominating Deputies of political parties.

Article 36. This article measures the minimum and maximum number of voters, who can collect signatures in support of this or that nominee – from 3 to 10 persons. Why cannot this group be larger?

Article 37. According to this article, the citizens of the Russian Federation, who permanently live on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, have the right to participate in the elections of local Deputies, too. This highly interesting innovation seems to have been adopted for the sake of the prospective unification of Belarus and Russia into one country, since this right is not given to the citizens of other countries – Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, etc – who permanently live of the territory of the Republic of Belarus. Thus the population of Belarus is being divided into better and worse people on the basis of their citizenship.

Article 40. According to this article, the decision to nominate a candidate can be abolished even three days before the elections. This will allow the authorities to influence (to put pressure on) the working groups in order to recall those nominees, whom the "vertical workers" do not like.

Article 54. According to this article, the voters, who owing to any reason will not be able to vote at home on the day of elections, are allowed to give votes in advance. We know the results of that kind of "democracy" from the experience with Lukashenka's referendum, when people had been persuaded for two weeks to give their votes in advance. And they did it – just by factories, by villages, by military bodies...

Article 55. This article regulates one more democratic principle of elections: on participation of the citizens, who because of the state of health or any other important reason cannot come to the polling station to vote. They can vote at the place of residence. Again, we know very well what it will become in the Belarusan medium. The authorities form a "mass of manoeuvre", which visits villages and flats and prompts to old and feeble people how and for whom they should ballot...

Article 56. According to this article, public observers, vicarious agents of the nominees and other authorised agents are not allowed in during the poll. Who can guarantee a faithful and fair poll then?

Article 57. According to this article, elections are considered as completed and a nominee as elected in the first voting, when more than fifty per cent voters has taken part in the poll and the nominee has received support of more than fifty per cent voters taking part in the poll. In the opinion of many experts, such a high barrier is likely to be insurmountable for most nominees, especially for those without official support from the side of the authorities...

Starting from this issue, "The Right for Freedom" will publish the notes of a famous Belarusan bard Andrey Mel'nikau, who recently has spent several months in the Grodna Investigation Ward (the ward where the film crew of the Russian TV (ORT) with Pavel Sharamet at the head was kept at the same time) for the attempt to cross the Belarus-Lithuania border. How and for what he got there, what kind of order and morals reign today in the Belarusan investigation wards, what their "contingent" and "service" are, how the prisoners live, what they dream and hope of – please read about all this and other many things in the notes of Andrey MEL'NIKAU.

A Trip Behind Bars

The last year of 1997 was shaping very well for me. Owing to the prize I took at the previous "Bards' Autumn" in Bel'sk Padliaski, I managed to release the tape "Way", which was made in Belastok, my "Anarchy Records" albums were sold out very well, I was shot twice for the telecast "The Belarusan House", my concerts in Mienk, Grodna, Pinsk, Novapolatsk were a success... I visited the Second Assembly of the Belarusans of the World. My son was growing up. I received invitations for the Autumn Conference of Belarusans in Gdan'sk and the Assembly of the Belarusan Youth of the World. On April 27, I came out as an auctioneer on the real estate auction in Grodna.

The next morning I was expected to be in Belastok. Polish documentarists were shooting a film on the Belarusan people, and, owing to Sakrat Janovich, a Belarusan ideologist from Poland, I should have played the most authentic Belarusan bard and sing an authentic Belarusan war-time song, enflamed by views of beautiful Belarusan landscapes.

The train from Homel was to arrive in Mienk in several minutes after the bus to Belastok was moving off. I set my last hope on my friends, who had agreed to hold up the transport till my arrival, if needed.

When approaching Mienk, I moved into the last carriage, so that it would be closer to run to the bus station, and found out with joy that the train was coming to the railway station somewhat five minutes ahead of the schedule. An unexpected stop on the Mienk-Southern suddenly. The five spare minutes turn into nothing. Silence.

The conductor answered on my questions indifferently, as if speaking about a usual matter, "A-ah, "Stalypin" is being coupled to. We'll wait for another ten minutes."

"Stalypin" is the carriage for prisoners, the carriage with prisoners. How distant seemed to me that world behind bars then...

Despite the train came behind time, I successfully took the bus to Belastok. My friends kept the situation under their control. The first warning of the fate was left without attention.

Another warning sounded on June 19, during the first concert of my rock-group "Colorado Beatles". While relating about his peripetia in court and prison, poet Slavamir Adamovich mentioned a date onwards – August 13. Exactly on that day, August 13, 1997, a criminal case was initiated against me.

But then Adamovich's reserve was set aside, too. His prediction proved out later, already after the jail term, during watching the videotape of that concert...

One warm August day in 1997, a group of tourists, who wanted to travel through historical places of Vilnus and Orsha regions and the Lake District, left Mahileu on an old patched-up "LAZ" and drove westwards. I was among those tourists – with my guitar, harmonic, a field kit: a tent, a sleeping-bag, warm clothes and two backsacks for that kit and other small stuff.

Having visited Mienk, Zaslau'e, Zhodzishki and other famous places, our "crew" splits at the Lithuanian border. Part of the group (with Lithuanian visas) takes the bus to Vilnus and Troki, the others stay for a day.

I have not been to Vilnus for seven years, though I visited it for the first time in 1988. There I buried my Soviet patriotism and acquired the feeling of being a Belarusan. With that feeling of a Belarusan the feeling of freedom came. I even wanted to stay there forever, but... This city did not need me. It lived in my mind as something party-coloured, multicultural and polycivilized. I dreamed of seeing it again after a long separation. But at the visa department in Orsha I got only the stamp, that my passport was valid for all foreign travel, and did not manage to effect a Lithuanian visa. It could not prevent me from meeting the Belarusan Sacred City once again however: I had to cross the Belarus-Lithuania border on foot, through the woods, avoiding stations of post control (SPC).



The day in Lithuania, Vilnius and Troika, filled with sightseeing and a concert with my participation at the Association of Belarusan School, has slid past. Our bus is rushing towards the Lithuania-Belarus border. Night. A feeling of fatality in this situation. We'll have to cross the borderline in the darkness. We pass successfully the station of Lithuanian highway patrol police. The policeman looks into the bus and permits to go.

We are driving by a convoy waiting for the customs examination. It is high time for those without visas to get out.

The driver refuses to stop at our request and does it only when the convoy remains somewhere behind and there is a SPC searchlight in some hundreds meters in front...

On Monday, August 11, 1997, at 0.30 local time, at the SPC "Lavaryshkos" (the borough of Lavaryshki could be found on the maps already in the sixteenth century), I was detained by Lithuanian frontier guards with dogs and led to the building of SPC. A talk with the Commander of the

Station. It seems that some more hours, let it be a day, and you are free. Or, maybe, a fine. I have made harm neither to people nor to Lithuania nor to Belarus.

First I was promised to be sent to Lukishki, where Kastus' Kalinouski (Kostas Kalinauskas in the Lithuanian records) wrote his historical letters under arrest until he was hung and where in the twenties 200 Belarusan prisoners conducted a week-long hunger-strike and had their will. The term in Lukishki meant sweeping Vilnus streets for a couple of weeks. According to the Lithuanian legislation, several dozens lits are written off from the fine sum for every day in jail (if the person fined for crossing the border has no money, it must be worked out in jail). This news provoked me to heave an almost happy chuckle – at last the city needed me! The Lithuanians considered my reaction to be either a sneer or disbelief in their words and repeated their "threat".

The protocol was drown up and, after waiting for a while, Belarusan bard Aleh Mizula, who also was arrested not far away from the SPC, and I were simply transferred to the Belarusan SPC "Katlouka". It was in vain that Aleh tried to explain to the Lithuanians that from that side of the borderline we would face a much longer jail term. In vain he pleaded for political asylum. The Lithuanians seemed not to care about it. They took out from our pockets the passports of citizens of the Republic of Belarus. We were aliens in Lithuania.

Hands behind our backs, we are going towards the frontier bar. The bus I came with from Mahileu passes by and vanishes in distance and darkness.

The duty officer of "Katlouka", captain Bel'ski, was not happy at all about the extra work with us. The long period of time, when he was receiving the documents of infiltrees from his Lithuanian colleagues, we spent sitting on the wooden floor of SPC. After the Lithuanians had gone, the captain locked us in the classroom next to his room. It was rather warm there and we could sleep in soft leather armchairs.

In the morning – the captain's room again. We watch TV for some time, then an ensign orders us to take litter away from the highway in the area of the Belarusan SPC. If it is the payment for the unlawful crossing of the border, the price is not very high. We collect cigarette-ends, empty packets, and some other stuff. The day promises to be sunny again.

We did not return to the room of Bel'ski and stayed in the quiet corner between the SPC and the frontier canteen. We had an opportunity to flee, but out passports were at the captain, and this fact withheld us from doing that. Besides, we hoped of a quick release (maybe even on that day). How absurd was our hope!

In an hour we leave together with the duty shift of frontier guards in a covered dusty lorry body for Astravets. The frontier guards get out as far as they approach their houses, but some of them remain in the body, and together with them we are going to the Astravets Frontier Commandant's Office.

There – a search with undressing. I am taken away of a cross and forty three thousand of Belarusan roubles. The lieutenant that is busy with my raincoat takes out from its pockets several mushrooms, swears and gives me the rain-coat back. Some more mushrooms remain in the pockets.

During the search, the lieutenant, as if in passing, opens before me a book of RB Criminal Code at art.80 – "crossing of the state border beyond the check-point": up to tree years in prison – part 1, up to five years – part 2 (repeated or group crossing).

The lieutenant proposes to find "two hundred bucks" in order to escape punishment. The sum is too large, I do not have such money, and it is shameful to ask anybody for it. I do not realise the seriousness of the situation. I think that he tries to intimidate me.

After the search Aleh and I get locked in the study of the Commandant's Office. Several tables, stands on the walls, two more or less unbroken chairs and a broken one. In the corner – a water tank and a glass.

At large the whole building of the Commandant's Office looks unauthoritative. It is wooden, dusty, quite old and of bad quality. "Holland" stoves for heating...

A while later, lieutenant colonel Aliaksandr Piatrovich Lapo, a tall, moustached and dismal person, enters the study. He enters and starts swearing as a trooper at Aleh. Aleh is in the Commandant's Office not for the first time, they know him there, and the lieutenant colonel held "a course of education" for him several weeks before. He shouts, "Pig! You'll be in prison!"

Lapo has nothing against me. He just proposes to find two hundred bucks within several hours and to get free.

Having said everything he wanted, the lieutenant colonel goes out.

I did not even try to look for dollars. I thought that the society would defend me anyway. That's why I only tried to support Aleh morally and hoped that my authority would help us both to get out. I should admit it was the grossest mistake I could make. By staying with Aleh I could help him morally, but I gave them an opportunity to initiate a case on crossing the borderline "by a group of people", which, according to the Belarusan legislation, enhanced the article and added to the term of imprisonment. I am not speaking about nerves and money wasted by my relations, about the fact that in the end the expenses exceeded the sum in "two hundred bucks", at the expense of which I would have paid off from the frontier guards. Later my imprisonment sustained the thought, that any official bribe-taker is better than a fanatic of the Belarusan legality. And my authority for the society, which could defend me and forward my release, turned out to be my sheer imagination.

Some more hours of waiting, and Aleh and I, accompanied by the convoy and lieutenant colonel Lapo, are in the red 'Moskvich" on the way to the frontier unit in Hautsi. Hautsi is situated five kilometres away from Smarhon'. En route the lieutenant colonel prophesies, where and for how long each of us will serve the term. "The bucks" are disaffirmed, and now I face a year in the colony in Orsha. Before that we will be neighbours to Sharamet in the Grodna prison. And earlier we we'll spend ten days in the frontier terminal isolation ward in Hautsi, where, according to Lapo, I will eat the mushrooms from my own pockets.

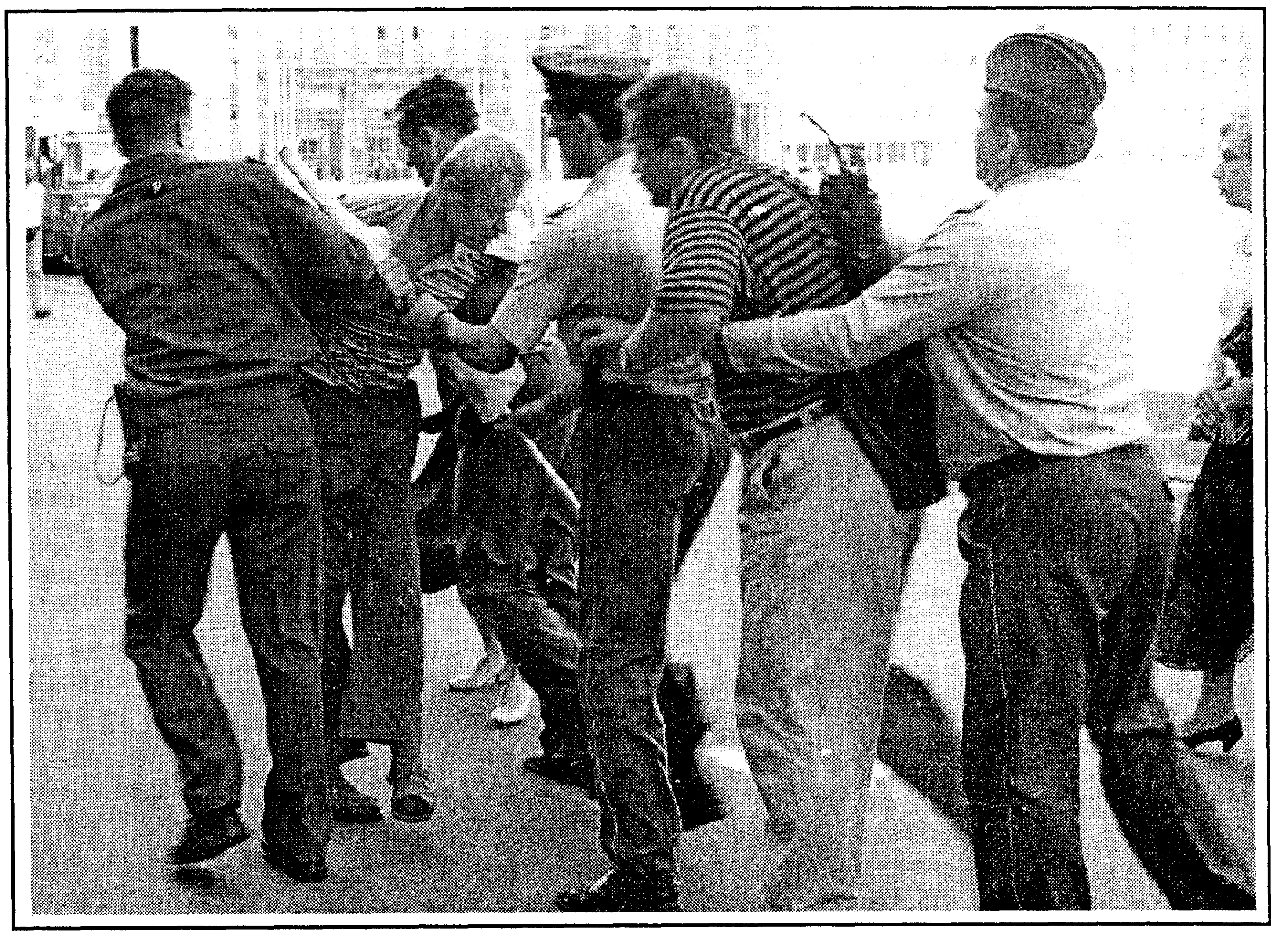
I still do not perceive a real threat in his forecast. The August sun is shining, native people we meet or pass are going on their own businesses. At the entrance of the military unit there is a crowd of men and women in civil with parcels. They must be parents of the prisoners.

The car enters the territory of the unit through the gates with a star. We get out. The convoy leads us to a brick building.

I will not happen to see lieutenant colonel Lapo once again. Several days later he will be promoted for either a managing or a teaching job in Smarhon'. From all his predictions, the Grodna prison will come true. I will be lucky to meet Sharamet, and Aleh will go the examination in the same jeep with Zavadski (though Zavadski will sit in the saloon, while Aleh will be placed in the "dog"-cabin). After three months of my detention, KGB investigator Turach will offer me to take away from the affidavit the incident with two hundred dollars and Lapo, thus tempting me on the contrary to accent this episode everywhere. But two more months will pass behind bars, my feelings will calm down, later in liberty I will have some talks with people not indifferent to my fate, and finally I will find out that in the Astravets Commandant's Office I was given a chance to come back to the regular life through an ordinary bargain. I did not take it, and already in several hours my freedom was beyond the scope of the economically-minded lieutenant colonel.

(continuation to follow)

Politics Facts Comments



(continued from page 1)

On August 11, the trial of Anatol' Liabedz'ka, deputy at the 13th Session of the Supreme Council, took place. He was incriminated to participation in the opposition youth action "Belarus to Europe", which was held more than a year ago – on March 14, 1997. It was the third trial of Liabedz'ka on this case. Two previous times the trials were cancelled by the City and Supreme Courts because of lack of evidentiary support of A.Liabedz'ka's participation in the action. The case returned to the Mienk Central Court again and again. This time the "well-known" Judge Anatol' Barysionak found the guilt of A.Liabedz'ka proven and fined him 5 million roubles (100 US dollars).

On August 11 and 17, Mikola Gryshan and Vasil' Aleinikau, publishers of the independent newspaper "Our Truth", which comes out in the village of Dziatlava, Grodna region, were fined 5 million roubles (Mikola Gryshan) and 3 million roubles (Vasil' Aleinikau) at the sitting of the Administrative Commission of Dziatlau Executive Committee for administrative wrongdoing at the time of issuing and distributing the newspaper. The publishers themselves collegiate their persecution with the critical articles concerning local authorities, printed in the newspaper.

On August 12, the first juridical sitting in re the newspaper "Nasha Niva" [Our Cornfield] took place at Supreme Economic Court. On this sitting lawfulness of the warning, issued to "Nasha Niva" by Belarusan State Printing Committee, was discussed. The newspaper was charged with violating art.6 of the Print Law, which obliges newspapers to use "the accepted language standards". Let us remind you, that "Nasha Niva" is being published in "Tarashkevitsa", i.e. Belarusan orthography, annihilated by Bolsheviks' reform of 1933. Judge Iryna Piatukhova arrived at a decision to conduct "a complex examination" of the newspaper's language, for that a special expert group will be formed.

On August 13, Igar Golubeu, an investigator of the Soviet District Prosecutor's Office of Mienk, interrogated a leader of "Youth Front" Tsimokh Dranchuk in connection with the prosecution of Seviarynets. Tsimokh, a witness in this case, was brought to the Prosecutor's Office in handcuffs and escorted by a militia detail. As a non-adult, he refused to go to the examination without his parents, that is why the militiamen stretched him on the floor, handcuffed and brought to the Prosecutor's Office by force. The investigator took an interest in different questions concerning the bulletin "Youth Messenger", Pavel Seviarynets having been its Editor-in-Chief.

On August 19, the Sub-Commission of UN Commission on Human Rights, the 50th sitting of which takes place in Geneva, passed a resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus. The resolution brings out "a profound concern on the ground of information about the fact, that the Belarus authorities keep under arrest, detain or by any other means oppress Belarusan political leaders, journalists and defenders of human rights, when they try to embody their right to freedom of opinion and expression by discovering, criticising and commenting in any other way on misfeasance from the side of state officials, which forces the atmosphere of fear and impatience". The Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities of UN Commission on Human Rights called on the Belarus authorities "to maintain the International Law in the branch of human rights by dint of securing journalists" and human rights defenders' immunity and protection of their rights..."

On August 21, a penitence action in connection with the 30th anniversary of bringing the Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia was conducted in Mienk. The picket was run by "Charter-97" under the motto "Czech and Slovak people, please forgive us!" Participants of the action carried in their hands Czech, Slovak and Belarusan national flags and banners with inscriptions in four languages (Czech, Slovak, Russian and Belarusan). During the picket, leaflets and issues of the newspaper "Narodnaya Volya" [People's Will] with articles on the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 were being distributed.

On August 27, as the press-service of BSDP "Narodnaya Gramada" informs, the party leader Mikola Statkevich handed in to the State Car Inspection the technical papers and license plates of his car "Zhiguli", issued in 1980. In the evening SCI workers advised him, that he would not be given his documents back and his car would be arrested until he paid a 60-million-roubles fine, given him for his participation in opposition actions. Uladzimir Kobyshau, Judge of the Pershamaiski District court, had taken that decision as if at the request of the court executives. M.Statkevich stated in connection with this, that he would pay off the fines on no account, first of all by moral reasons, since "Lukashenka anyway is one of the richest people in Europe and will go without money of the Statkevich family".

On August 27, two unknown people smashed in the door of the flat of Viktar Ivashkevich, Editor-in-Chief if the Free Trade Union bulletin "The Worker", and executed a search there. Viktar Ivashkevich, who was at that time at work, stated, that no valuables had disappeared and that the cracksmen must have been interested in documents. Editor-in-Chief of the bulletin "The Worker", which is being circulated in 50,000 copies, considers this incident to be an intimidation action, conducted by "the unknown" on the eve of mass rallies of members of all Belarusan trade unions, both official and free, planned for this autumn.

On August 28, the trial of "Charter–97" leaders Zmitser Bandarenka and Aleh Bebenin and Supreme Council deputy Valery Shchukin took place in

Moscow District Court in Mienk. They were charged with conduction of an action in support of political prisoners on July 3, 1998. That day they together with their friends walked into the October Square of the capital city, where, in front of thousands of people, they unfolded banners "Freedom to the political prisoners!", "Freedom to Andrey Klimau!" and began handing out the bulletins of "Charter-97"... The bench found Z.Bandarenka, A.Bebenin and V.Shchukin guilty in conducting "a mass procession and picket", issued warnings to Z.Bandarenka and A.Bebenin and fined V.Shchukin 5 million roubles.

In August, an unusual action, entitled "A Telephone Meeting", was organised by a BPF local in Babruisk. BPF members put into mailboxes of the town residents leaflets with a suggestion to call the Babruisk authorities and ask the same question: "When will trolleybuses go to the remote communities?" Telephone sets of the "vertical workers" did not stop that day.

In August, leaders of Homel youth organisation "Public Forum" held several football matches in support of the political prisoner Aliaxey Shydlouski. A football match took place on August 8 in Rechitza, after which the players and amateurs went through the town streets under white-red-white flags. A competition between the Charnigau youth team and the Ukrainian Liberal Party took place in Homel on August 15, on August 16 the oppositionists played in Svetlahorsk against their colleagues from the youth association "Kresiva", and on August 20 – in Babruisk against the team of town's united opposition.

On August 31, the Frantsishak Skaryna Association of the Belarusan language ran a meeting in defence of the Belarusan language on the Yakub Kolas Square in Mienk. Among the demands, there was one to found a Belarusan National University.

The materials above have been prepared by the Press Service of the Human Rights Centre "Spring-96"

OFFICIALLY

DOCTORS ARE WORRIED...

On August 11, President of the international non-governmental organisation "Doctors for Human Rights" Charle Cleman addressed Belarus President Aliaksandr Lukashenka with a letter in defence of the imprisoned 13th Supreme Council deputies Andrey Klimau and Uladzimir Kudzinau. In particular, it is said in the letter:

"Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the organisation "Doctors for Human Rights", an NGO unifying thousands of professional medical men, well-known scientists and citizens interested in such problems, I would like to express an extreme concern in connection with imprisonment of Andrey Klimau and Uladzimir Kudzinau. Andrey Klimau, detained since February 1998, and Uladzimir Kudzinau, detained since February 1997, are deputies at the 13th session of the Supreme Council.

It is known that Andrey Klimau suffers from pains in the chest, still he has not been put under medical supervision yet, according to reliable sources of information. We are worried about possible worsening of his health in case, if the Belarus authorities go on keeping him in prison. Besides, we feel concern because of the fact, that the conditions of imprisonment may influence considerably the state of health of these two prisoners and later on threaten their lives.

We ask you to provide Andrey Klimau and Uladzimir Kudzinau with necessary medical care. With that, we demand their urgent and implicit release in case the accusations against them are not brought.

Your interference with this humane matter will be highly appreciated. I am waiting forward to further development of the events in re Kudzinau and Klimau.

Charle Cleman

...AND SO ARE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

On August 27-28, conference "The Christian-Democratic and Conservative Parties of the CIS" took place in St.Petersburg. Representatives of international organisations, political parties, deputies of European Parliament, Parliament Assembly of Council of Europe and national parliaments – altogether about a hundred participants from 20 countries – were present.

As a result of the two-days' work, it was resolved to found the Pan-European Forum of National Parties. Next meeting will be held in Kiev in August 1999.

The participants of the conference passed a special resolution on politics in Belarus. Leaders of the Christian-Democratic International expressed their readiness to start a campaign of solidarity with Belarus Supreme Council deputies Andrey Klimau and Uladzimir Kudzinau, employing for that groups in national parliaments and interparliamental organisations.

STATEMENT

OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE "CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES IN THE CIS" ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

We, participants of the conference,

express our concern about the development of events in Belarus and declaim application of force against Supreme Council deputies, leaders of United Civil Party, Belarusan Popular Front and other democratic parties and public organisations of Belarus, including keeping them under arrest;

protest against the existing limitations on free dissemination of information and against total control of the executive authorities over mass media;

declaim the actions of the Belarusan authorities in regard to diplomatic representations of foreign countries in the Republic of Belarus.

We, participants of the conference,

insist on indispensable preservation of human rights, putting an end to victimisation of Supreme Council deputies, members of democratic parties and public organisations of Belarus and on urgent release of those imprisoned;

demand a free access of opposition powers to electronic mass media;

call President Lukashenka to abide by the Vienna Convention on diplomatic contacts and build his relations with foreign embassies only within the rules of International Law;

propose all right-to-hand parties of OSCE Member States to give all support to UCP, BPF and other democratic powers of Belarus, as well as to take actions toward normalisation of the situation in the Republic of Belarus by applying their capabilities on the parliament and government levels.

Old Sayings in a New Way...

Lukashenka says to his subordinates Sheiman, Tsitsiankou and others:

— First we must hog Pazniak.

— Why Pazniak?

— Because I will need you.

President is speaking for his electorate at a regular meeting. A father and son are watching it on TV. The son asks:

— Dad, why does he wiggle and swing his arms so much while speaking?

— It is much more difficult to hit a moving target, my son...

A man comes up to a railway ticket-window:

— Could you give me a ticket to Lukashenkaburg, please?

The confused ticket agent answers:

— We don't have such a town...

— I know, but isn't it an advance booking office?

A wife and husband are watching President's speech on TV. The wife asks:

— What do you think it is better – to be fool or bold?

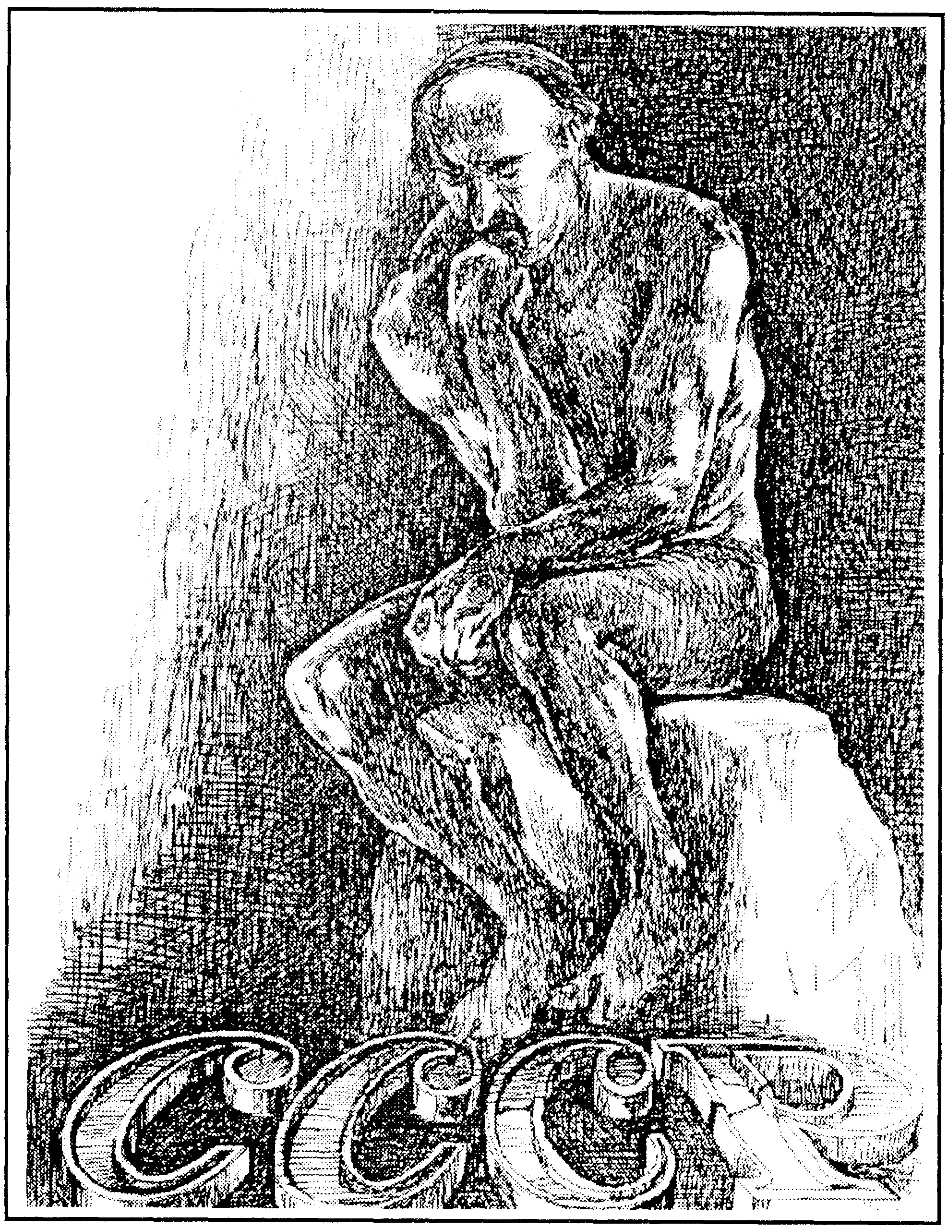
— Fool, of course.

— Why?

— It is not so noticeable.

The wife, looking at President, says:

— You men think in the same way.



— What is the politics of Lukashenka, a progress or a cheat?

— A progress in cheating.

Lukashenka and Eltzin, great amateurs of sports, decided to compete in running for a hundred metres. So they ran. Eltzin outran Lukashenka. The next day Belarusan newspapers reported, "To the finish line of the 100-metre sprint Lukashenka came second, Eltsin – last but one".

— Why did meat disappear from the stores?

— Because we are rushing towards the market socialism so quickly, that the cattle does not follow us.

— Do you have in Belarus a personality cult?

— We do have a cult, but we don't have a personality.

Quotations to be Remembered

Recently Belarus President Aliaksandr Lukashenka published the next, already third book – a digest of his speeches, articles and interviews. President's expressions are divided thematically into almost sixty topics of the Belarusan life. We hope that it will be interesting for the "RF" readers to get familiar with some ideas of the Belarus President on problems, cognate to our issue. But it is for you to decide, whether it is true or not...

On Democracy

"Human rights – it is also the right to work, to medical care, to equal pay and many other things. That's why we should speak not only about the problems with freedom of expression".

On Freedom of the Press

"With us we have freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freethinkers are not persecuted, no newspaper has been closed by force, no journalist has been victimised".

On National Security

"Hardly had I remarked on the necessity to respond on the expansion of NATO, I got into the blacklist of the Western countries".

On the Status of Women

"I give the last penny, if I have it, to people and to women first of all. I have a profound respect for woman. She is a bee of our community, she is a willing horse".

On Opposition

"The irreconcilable opposition is ready for any provocation in order not only to swing but also to turn over the ship of our State".

On Integration

"Integration of the post-Soviet lands – it is the only way to peace and stability, including for the West".

On Privatisation

"There was state property, but somebody took it, shaved off the coupons and went away, having left behind thousands of people to the mercy of fate".

On Crimes

Unlike a number of countries, our state, forgive me for being indiscreet, is being governed by a non-corrupt president".

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